

Cold facts on winter safety

By Tech. Sgt. Leonard Turner
8th Fighter Wing Safety office

The time of the year for encountering the thrills and pitfalls of snow, ice and freezing temperatures is upon us. Protect yourself from the elements and enjoy them safely.

Before you step out the door, dress for the weather. Here are a few winter fashion tips:

r Dress in several layers of thick, loose-fitting clothing – cotton, wool, and down are all good insulators. Avoid perspiration for it increases the risk of frostbite and hypothermia. A well-designed system will have at least three layers: underwear, insulation and an outer shell.

r Wear wool socks and thick-soled waterproof boots with linings. For extra warmth, wear thin cotton socks under the wool stockings. Don't pack your feet in. You want to leave room for warm air to circulate in the boot.

r On a cold day, 60 percent of your body heat can escape through your head. The neck loses heat almost as fast. Keep your head, face and neck protected in wool sweaters, hats, and scarves.

r Polarized sunglasses cut down on glare and possible snow blindness.

When driving in bad weather plan ahead. Make sure you have enough fuel. Clear your vehicle of ice and snow. Make sure your windows are clear of ice and fog. Turn on your lights when driving. Wear your seat belt at all times. Let someone know where you're going and the route you're taking so you can be searched for if you don't arrive at a reasonable time. Check for current and future weather and road conditions.

When temperatures near freezing, always expect black ice. Remember bridges and overpasses freeze up first and stay frozen longer than other road surfaces.

Be exceptionally wary during early morning and late evening when road icing is most likely to occur. Slow down and drive with care. Driving too fast allows you less time to react and reduces your chances of recovering from a mistake.

The bottom line is don't go outside in inclement weather unless you absolutely have to, dress in warm layers and ensure your vehicle is prepared. Remember, walking and riding bicycles are just as dangerous as driving a vehicle. Several injuries occur each year at Kunsan from people slipping and falling due to ice.

Ground Zero visit brings mixed feelings

By 2nd Lt. Tana Hamilton
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WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio - I've been to New York City before, but at the end of September I saw a different place. The events of Sept. 11 changed my previously scheduled visit. I spent two days there. I had to see Ground Zero. My feelings were very mixed about why I had to go there, and what my purpose was, but I knew that I would go. Since I already was in Manhattan, I set out on foot for this pilgrimage. I decided that as a military member, I wanted to see the reason we'd engage in another long conflict, this time called "war."

I walked south on Broadway and shopped a bit along the way to distract my mind from my final destination. The streets still had traffic, though there was a ban on cars with only one passenger entering the city during peak hours. Things didn't look terribly different, yet.

As I got closer to where the towers once stood, I asked a store clerk where was the closest place to view the scene. I felt weird, like I was asking directions to a cemetery that still had ongoing processions. After all, this site still contained the bodies of thousands.

I would not need directions. As I walked closer to the towers, a putrid odor, similar to the charred smell of a house razed by fire, permeated the air. Its strength was surprising, since I was still blocks away, and this was two weeks after the attack.

Barriers on either side of the streets formed pathways so pedestrians could only cross at controlled points. I spoke to a policeman standing in front of

cleanup efforts — cranes, ladders and loud dump trucks — who proudly told me that he was also a New Jersey Air National Guardsman.

I continued down the tunneled path until I stared directly at the remains of the World Trade Center North Tower. I didn't expect it to look so sterile. Police buses, rented fences and uniformed military members stood between the building and the closest accessible point.

In contrast to its blackened, hollow exterior, a tall white and glass high-rise stood behind it with a large American flag proudly hanging near the top.

My nostrils burned from the smell, and my stomach turned. I tasted why people I'd seen there on television wore surgical masks. I had enough for one day.

The next evening, I went back to where I had left the day before, and circled the scene. At every intersection with a clear view, there were tourists and locals: never enough to block the whole road, never lingering too long, never talking too loudly. Some took videos or snapshots with their cameras. There was a somber feeling as couples put arms around their partners' backs, for some sort of comfort.

In the chilly night air, I saw the South tower. I was glad I didn't see it the first time. It wasn't black, like the first one. It burned white and ashen, and the steel beams were more mangled. Smoke still rose from the floors underneath it, still burning like the remains of a campfire.

I passed a parking garage blocks away from the towers that had a lone car remaining. It must have been a white car, but I couldn't tell through

the inch or so of dust that had settled on it. Some had written poetry, or names and dates on the dusty windows of empty stores. Most of the memorial balloons, candles and signs had been moved to Union Square or washed away by the rain of the preceding days.

I spoke to every military member I saw along the way. Most of them were Guardsman or Reservists. I asked them about their shifts, which most said lasted 12 hours. I asked them about their rotations, and many were willing to work the continuous days.

One military member talked of the priest who died when someone who jumped from the tower landed on him. He showed me the priest's business card, and told me of his devotion to victims of fires in the city. A soldier showed me a picture he carried in his pocket that an elementary school child colored and sent to thank the workers.

As a former combat camera photographer, I've documented humanitarian efforts, military operations and the effects on the victims in other countries. I've never seen destruction like this in my own country. This time, those affected were my friends, fellow military members and other Americans.

I had no desire to go any closer to get more images. I only wanted to offer my encouragement to those there, the heroes that witness our war zone daily and to understand what happened in New York City. I still don't understand. But the hollow, solemn place that I saw, I will never forget.

(Courtesy Aeronautical Systems Center Public Affairs)

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The commander's hotline is your direct line of communication between me and the Wolf Pack. It's one of several means of helping to resolve concerns and to get my response to comments and questions. As a general rule, I ask you to contact the agency involved first, but if you are not satisfied, call the hotline at 782-5284, e-mail the 8th Fighter Wing Public Affairs office or e-mail me directly.

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Col. Burt Field
8th Fighter Wing commander



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The editorial content is edited, prepared, and provided by the 8th Fighter Wing Public Affairs office of Kunsan Air Base, Republic of Korea, which is located at Building 1305. The public affairs address

is 8th FW/PA, PSC 2 Box 2090, APO AP 96264.

Deadline for submissions to the **Wolf Pack Warrior** is no later than Thursday, 4:30 p.m., one week prior to publication.

The preferred medium for submission is e-mail to WolfPackWarrior@kunsan.af.mil.

Faxes and typewritten submissions are also accepted.

The voice mail to 8th Fighter Wing Public Affairs is 782-4705.

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